

# LONG EATON TOWN CENTRE Conservation Area Appraisal



**EREWASH**



October 2005



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## **LONG EATON TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**

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# 1 Location and Setting

The Borough of Erewash is located in the East Midlands in the south-east of the county of Derbyshire sitting in between the major cities of Derby and Nottingham. The area has a population of approximately 110,000 the majority of whom inhabit the three major urban centres, Long Eaton, Sandiacre and Ilkeston which lie along the boroughs eastern boundary. The remainder of the borough remains relatively rural in composition and is interspersed with smaller towns and villages. Within the Borough there are 20 Conservation Areas and 233 Listed Buildings.

In the North of the Borough Ilkeston and the surrounding villages and landscape sit on the southern tip of the Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire Coalfield. The area has become dominated by the residential settlements associated with mining and has in more recent years become largely industrialised. As the mining industry has died out and improved road and rail travel have allowed improved access to the area alternative industries have been allowed to expand.

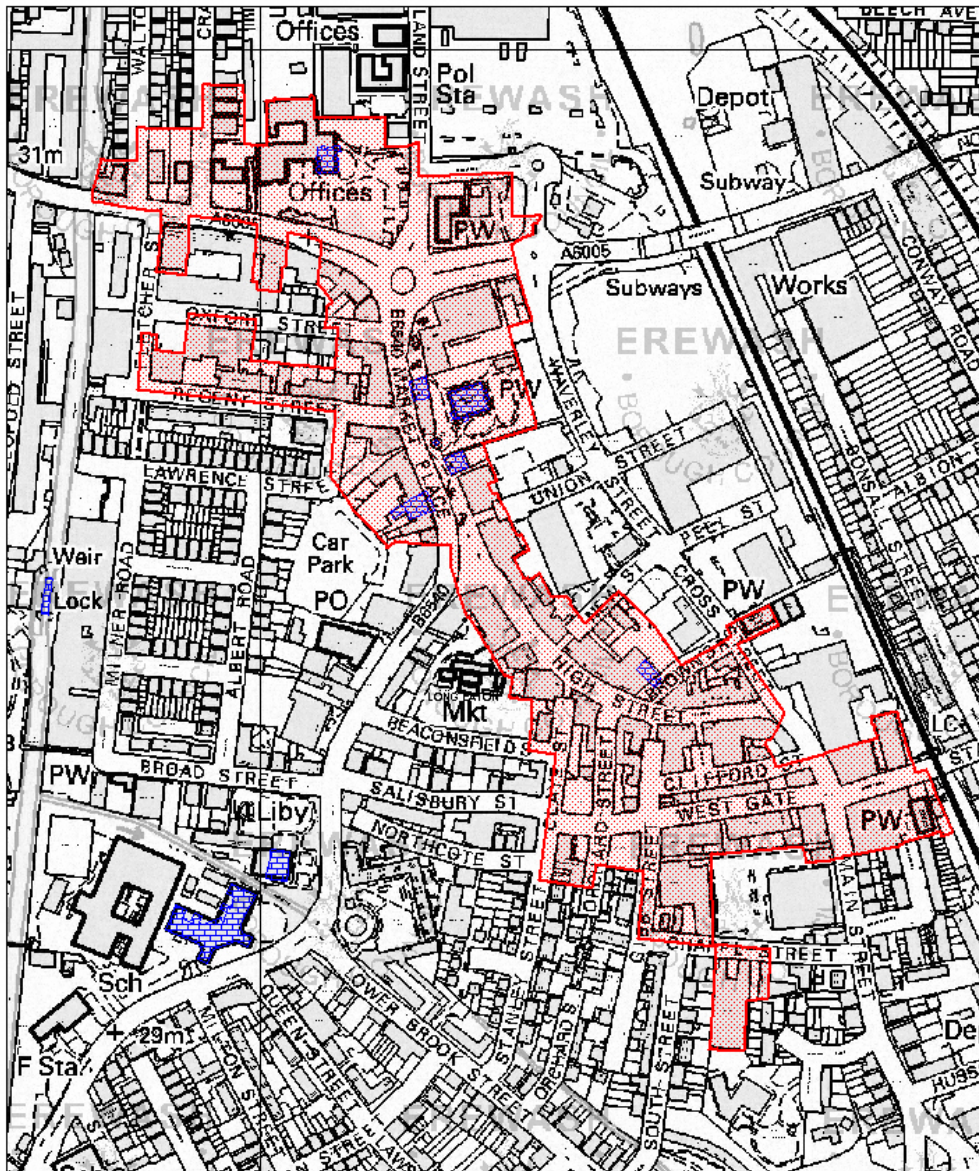
By contrast the south of the Borough is home to the lowland flood plains of the rivers Trent and Erewash and is generally more rural in composition with settlements here being associated with the Lace industry the growth of which was accelerated by the excellent transport links provided by the development of the canals and railways.

Long Eaton is situated eight miles east of Derby and has a history which dates back to before the 7th century. The town lies in the South of the Borough on low ground close to the confluence of the River Erewash and the River Trent.

Long Eaton began as a small agricultural village and did not experience major growth until the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the industrial revolution and the introduction of railway and canal links boosted the lace making industry. The population of the town grew from 3,000 in 1870 to a population of 20,000 for Long Eaton and Sawley in the early 1900's.

In more recent times Long Eaton is probably better known for its association with Trent Lock, a short walk from the town centre, well known as a centre for boating and sailing and other leisure activities.

### Long Eaton Town Centre Existing



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The Purpose Of This Map Is: Conservation Area Boundary

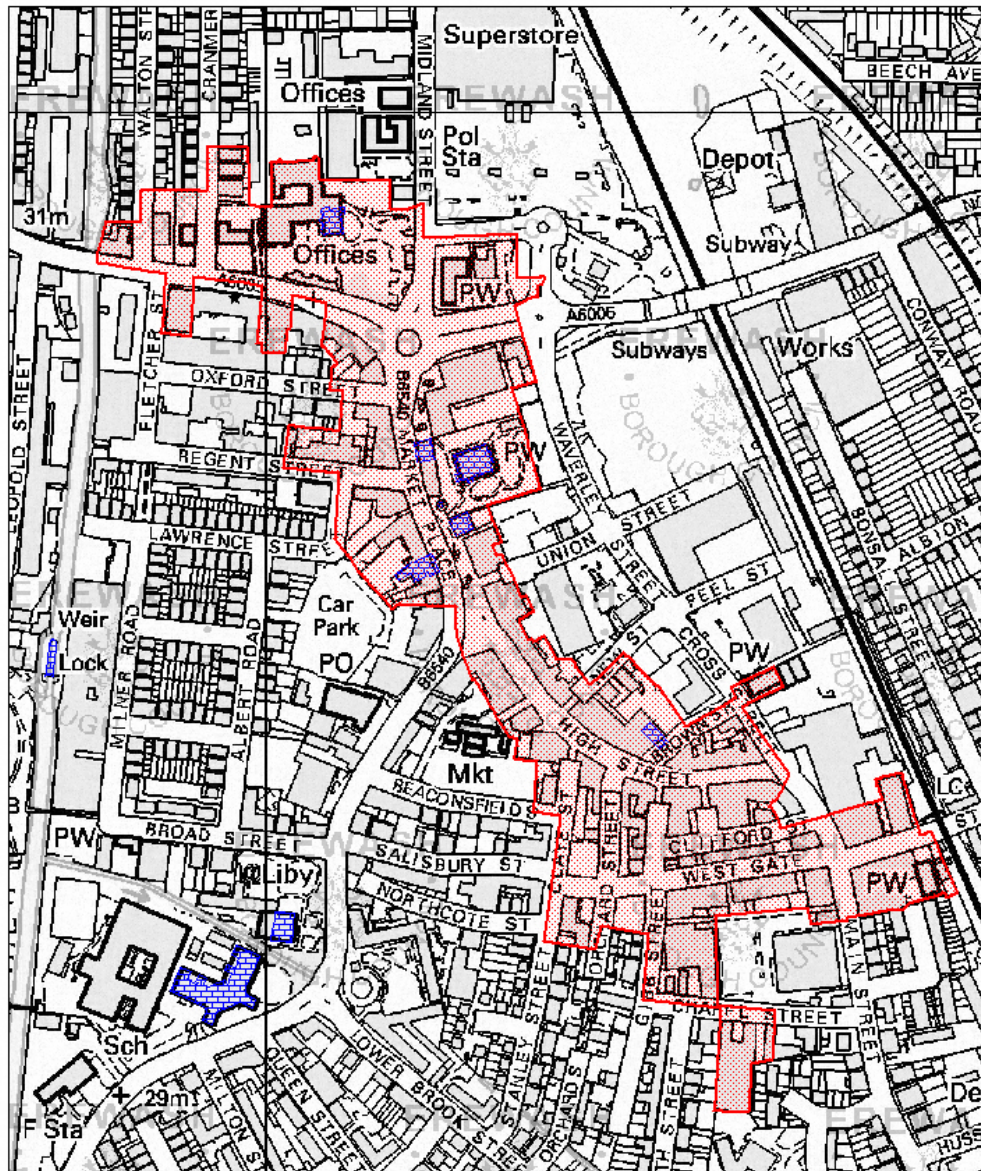
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Date: 9/11/2006

Conservation & Design

Planning Policy

Long Eaton Town Centre Proposed Conservation Area



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Conservation & Design

Policy & Development

The conservation area boundary is being revised to allow the Regents Lace Factory and associated chimney to be included with the immediately adjacent Long Eaton Lace Factories Conservation Area.

## 2 Long Eaton Town Centre Conservation Area

Long Eaton Town Centre was first designated a Conservation Area by Erewash Borough Council in 1993 (Figure 1). Thus recognising it as an area the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

The town is an architecturally diverse environment with a mix of historic architecturally important structures standing along side large modern developments. The Conservation Area is based around the historic core of the town centre and is predominantly characterised by the fine commercial buildings from the Victorian and Edwardian period and the early modern era. The majority of the buildings were designed for ground floor retail use fronting onto the High Street or the Market Place with residential living space being provided to the upper floors. The majority of the traditional buildings are three storeys in height and generally stand side by side to create a sense of enclosure within the streets.



Architecturally the character of the area is defined by the late Victorian and Edwardian buildings which line the High Street and Market Place. Further south in the conservation area the character is more industrial in composition and the architecture changes significantly reflecting and emphasising this change in use.

### 3. Origins and Development of Settlement

#### Topography

Long Eaton as we see it today has developed in an area on the lowland flood plains of the rivers Trent and Erewash, around the southern end of the Erewash Canal. The town is located to the east of the Trent Valley Wash lands which run through from Burton-on-Trent in the west to Long Eaton in the east.

#### Historical Development

The original small agricultural settlement was named from the Anglo Saxon 'Aitone'. The name 'Aitone' is the first recorded reference to the town in the Domesday Book of 1086. In 1228 Aitone was given the prefix 'Long' probably in reference to the length of the village.

The first record of a market in Long Eaton is a reference to Nicholas Alvyne, a Nottingham baker selling his goods in the town in 1593. However, the first official Saturday market was held in 1881, the tradition of the street market continues in Long Eaton to the present day.



In 1779 the Erewash canal was completed at a cost of £25,000 thus providing the first major transport links for the towns and villages of the borough.



#### Erewash Canal

This was followed by the railways which arrived in Long Eaton some 60 years later in 1839 when the Derby to Nottingham line was opened on 4<sup>th</sup> June. This transport link was further boosted by the opening of the Erewash Valley railway in 1847. Such improvements in transport brought Long Eaton into the

throws of the industrial revolution and the town became a centre for quarrying and lace production.

Industrialisation led to rapid growth for the small 'agricultural village' and by 1870 Long Eaton had transformed into a modest town with a population of approximately 3,000.

The expansion of the town was predominantly due to the lace industry with the first reference to a lace factory being recorded in 1831, although the first large scale, four storey, lace factory was not constructed until the early 1850's. This factory was built just off the Market Place in the town centre by Joseph Austin and burned down later in 1884.

By the 1870's the town was flooded by a large influx of manufacturers, especially from Nottingham, its popularity was mainly due to a lack of union organisation resulting in low wages, so making production in the town more economically viable than Nottingham. The 'lace factories', though no longer in active production, still dominate the sky line of Long Eaton today and in essence form the Long Eaton Mills Conservation Area which borders the Town Centre Conservation Area.

By the early 1900's the population of Long Eaton and neighbouring Sawley had risen to nearly 20,000 and the lace trade was at it's height. In 1905 the town had some 800 lace machines with 1,200 Twisthands operating them.





#### **4. Archaeological Significance**

Archaeological work in the Trent Valley using the evidence of crop marks disclosed by aerial photography indicates that there was significant prehistoric settlement in the low-lying areas in which Long Eaton is located.

There is evidence of Neolithic and subsequent settlement on land between Long Eaton and the River Trent and there are several areas of crop marking around Long Eaton though none of these have been excavated.

On the south bank of the River Trent opposite Long Eaton, Red Hill has an important iron-age site believed to date from 500BC which was inhabited during Roman times.

All of the main settlements surrounding Long Eaton have names of Anglian or Anglo Saxon origin and in particular have –ton endings i.e. Barton, Breaston, Long Eaton, Elvaston, Hemmington, Lockington, Thrumpton and Toton.

A stone axe believed to be some 5000 years old was discovered on the bowling green on West Park this is the earliest recorded evidence of man within what is now Long Eaton. However, the town is located just a short distance from Sawley where there is a Roman road from Derby (Little Chester) to the River Trent.

Within the boundary of the Conservation Area the survival of the Norman Nave and Chancel which now form the South Isle of the existing church of St Laurence and St James provides archaeological interest above ground and indicate that there may be archaeology buried below ground level within the wider area of the church site.

## **5. Architectural & Historic Qualities**

### **Traditional Building Materials**

The dominant construction material is red brick often dressed with stone to sills, mullions, parapets and a variety of decorative embellishments etc.

There is a substantial amount of decorative detail in brick work in the area which creates ornate patterns to the front of many commercial buildings. Similarly, a good many buildings sport a number of decorative stone features.

Terracotta is widely used through out the conservation area both for decorative value and as a primary building material. Glazed bricks also play a major role in the dressing of buildings particularly as a material for traditional stall risers to shop fronts.

A number of buildings have rendered elevations to buildings which are predominantly painted either off-white or cream in colour.

### **Roofing Materials**

The dominant roofing material is natural Welsh slate although several buildings appear to have been re-roofed using modern false slate substitutes. There are also examples of dark clay tiles on later buildings in the area.

Many buildings are crowned with decorative terracotta or red clay ridge tiles and red clay decorative finials are also a common characteristic within the Conservation Area.

### **Building Elements**

#### **Chimney Stacks and Chimney Pots**

The majority of chimney stacks are largely unaltered and there are a variety of examples of complex decorative designs in the construction of the chimney stacks. A good many chimneys also retain their original pots with a substantial number of traditional red clay or terracotta crown pots to be found within the area.



**Decorative chimney stacks are an important feature in the Conservation Area**

### **Windows**

There are a variety of traditional window styles in the Conservation Area. These range from traditional timber painted single glazed casements and sliding sashes through to rare decorative oriel windows.



**Decorative windows add to the character of the Conservation Area.**

Many windows are decorative in their design, dressings or through the use of coloured glass. The variety of traditional historically important window details which have survived on the buildings is a distinctive and important characteristic of this conservation area.



## **Doors**

A small number of heavy timber panelled traditional entrance doors survive in the Conservation Area. On the commercial buildings these are entrances to the side of the main shop frontage or are located on a side elevation of the building. Historically this type of entrance door would have provided separate access to the accommodation in the upper floors of the buildings.



**Very few traditional panelled entrance doors have survived in the Conservation Area**

A large heavy timber panelled door can also be found at the main entrance to 'The Hall' at the head of the Conservation Area. Although the door is no longer in use by Erewash Borough Council the traditional front door has been retained and stands within a classical doorway of stone Doric columns and pediment.

Many of the traditional shop entrance doors have been replaced by later modern additions. However there are one or two shop doors remaining in the area which are traditional in style.

## **Shop Fronts**

There are no complete original shop fronts surviving in the Conservation Area. Although there are a substantial amount of frontages which retain some of their traditional features and elements.



### **An almost complete traditional shop frontage in the Market Place**

A number of frontages have traditional features such as decorative console brackets, panelled or decorative glazed brick stall risers, decorative glazing bars with feature mouldings and half panelled traditional style entrance doors.

## **Key Buildings**

### **Listed Buildings**



At one time Long Eaton was so unimportant that the now stately parish church of St Lawrence was merely a chapel of ease for Sawley. Then in 1868, the Victorian architect Street rebuilt the existing church using the Norman nave as its new south aisle.

Joseph Pickford of Derby, built the 'Hall' as a private residence for the Howitt family in 1778. The 'Hall' is three storeys in height and is constructed of red brick with ashlar and gauged brick dressings. The current building retains traditional sash windows to a pattern of six over six to the ground and first floor and three over three to the second floor. The building was purchased by the Long Eaton Urban District Council in 1921 and both the building and the Council were subsequently taken over by Erewash Borough Council in 1974. The 'hall' is now a grade II\* Listed building and has become the Town Hall standing almost at the head of the Conservation Area on its northern boundary.

The church of St Laurence (Grade II\*) stands in the centre of the Conservation Area and the steeple provides a significant landmark which can be viewed from many vantage points both within the immediate area and beyond. The nave and chancel of the original church is Norman in origin and now form the south aisle of the current church since the building was reconstructed by G E Street in 1868 who added a substantial nave, north aisle, chancel and north vestry.



A further key feature of the Conservation Area is the war memorial which stands six metres south west of St Laurence Church. The war memorial is listed Grade II. Erected around 1920 the memorial consists of a large stone cross on a deep octagonal base which has a corbelled out shelf to create a seat around the base.



J and H Lacey warehouse is located to the rear of 36 to 38 High Street and is almost completely masked by more modern developments. The building is a grade II listed former lace factory which was originally built in 1857. The building appears to be used as delivery storage space for the shop units which front High Street.

Numbers 38 and 40 Market Place are also Grade II listed this pair of buildings add significantly to the character of the area as their style and detail is quite individual and distinctive. The buildings were constructed in 1901 and 1903 and were designed by the architects Gorman and Ross.



Number 24 Market Place is Grade II listed, this building was constructed in 1889 by Watson Fothergill for Samuel Smiths Bank. The building is a striking red brick structure which stands adjacent to St Laurence's Church. In essence this building captures almost all of the important features of this conservation area with ornate brickwork and terracotta to the front elevation, feature stonework to ground floor windows openings and traditional sashes to the upper floors, decorative stone finials to the two front gables, the building also has complexly designed decorative brick chimney stacks.



## **6. Character and Relationship of Spaces**

The conservation area is a busy commercial space with all of the hustle and bustle generally associated with busy town centres. There is a heavy flow of vehicles through the Market Place at the top of the conservation area. On busy days the volume of traffic can be daunting to the pedestrian. However, there are two good pedestrian crossing points to allow movement from one side of the road to the other. The road leads up to the traffic island outside the 'Hall' where congestion is a regular problem for road users. Although again there are good effective road crossing points which allow for a relatively safe journey for pedestrians travelling the area on foot.

The area is enhanced by a pedestrianised zone created in 1997 which runs through the length of High Street. From this pedestrian zone users of the conservation area can gain access into the new Market Place where open air markets are still held on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Unfortunately, the surfacing and general appearance of today's Market Place is largely uninspiring and does little to promote Long Eaton as a modern day market town; this space will need improvement if the tradition of open air markets is to be maintained into the future.

Further respite is achieved in the well kept grounds of St. Laurence's church yard which provide a quiet sanctuary from the busy town centre streets. Both the church yard and the landscape gardens in front of the 'Hall' provide important green space in what is otherwise a heavily developed area. These two areas are vital to the character of the conservation area and are also essential in terms of the setting they both provide for the listed buildings with which they are individually associated.



It is unfortunate that good pedestrian flow is not a characteristic of the Long Eaton Town Centre Conservation Area. There is a lack of direction and although there are a number of small roads and alleyways along Market Place and High Street, the majority of these appear to lead to untidy, poorly kept areas at the rear of buildings and offer little in the way of circular continuous pedestrian through routes. The creation of pleasant well marked circular through routes may help to improve pedestrian use of the area as a whole and thus in turn encourage wider use of the area in its entirety and would be considered a major improvement for the town centre.

The character of the spaces within the area leaves little scope for the different spatial elements and environments to be enjoyed as a whole experience.



## **7. Landscape Appraisal**

### **Introduction**

Both the natural and man-made elements which make up the landscape surrounding the conservation area have a direct impact on the quality of the area within the boundary and on its wider setting.

Therefore, it is important to consider the conservation area in the context of its wider setting to enable a greater understanding of its character and appearance.

### **Setting of the Conservation Area**

#### **NORTH**

The northern boundary of the conservation area follows the line of Derby Road from the bridge which crosses the Erewash Canal across to the new mini traffic island associated with the new supermarket developments. The boundary takes in some significantly historic buildings which are considered to be of architectural merit along the edge of Derby Road. Beyond the boundary to the north of the Conservation Area the majority of development is residential in nature, mainly consisting of mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century red brick terraced housing.

#### **SOUTH**

To the south the conservation area boundary borders Cross Street where the historic commercial core of the town gives way to more modern development. Further out on the southern boundary beyond the modern development are a number of buildings of architectural merit and historic value which are also included within the Conservation Area where the southern border stretches down to abut the railway line.

#### **EAST**

In the east the area is again bordered by residential development of terraced housing. To the east the area is bordered by the Long Eaton Lace Factories Conservation Area, in this easterly direction it is the large imposing industrial factory buildings and associated chimneys and warehouses which dominate the skyline of the town.

#### **WEST**

Immediately west of the conservation area boundary are the large modern retail developments which have become dominant on the skyline of the town in this direction. The railway lies further out to the west of the area and a broad mix of residential development and industrial development enclose the town centre in this direction.

### **Gateways**

A number of gateways leading into the conservation area can be identified, such gateways are particularly important as they create the first impression of the conservation area to both regular users and visitors to the area. The impression created for visitors by the visual quality and appearance of these

sites has a direct impact on the perceived quality of the entire Conservation Area.

### **Derby Road Gateway**

This gateway is very significant as it is on the major road way which passes through the town bringing visitors in from the direction of Derby, the M1 motorway and the A52 major road networks. The actual gateway to the conservation area occurs at the canal bridge which carries the road over the Erewash Canal. At this entrance point visitors pass through the neighbouring Long Eaton Lace Factories Conservation Area before crossing the canal bridge and passing the landscaped garden and the frontage to the grade II\* listed 'Hall', now the Town Hall and Borough Council Offices. As visitors approach the traffic island which links Derby Road and Nottingham Road a glance to the right will provide a fleeting glimpse of the Grade II\* listed Church of St Laurence and St James.

### **Nottingham Road Gateway**

Again this a significant entry point to the conservation area as it the main through road for visitors travelling into the Town from the direction of Nottingham. Again this is a major road link and visitors will first encounter a small traffic island and the two large super market developments which are located on the eastern boundary of the Conservation Area. This approach to the town largely masks the inherent architectural value of the Conservation Area, though visitors are given a very clear impression that they have now entered the commercial centre of Long Eaton.

### **High Street Gateway**

This gateway to the conservation area is largely pedestrianised with vehicular access only provided for disabled users.

This entry point brings visitors immediately into the commercial core of the town centre and is predominantly flanked on either by buildings of architectural merit and historic interest. It is noted that this entry point provides a very distinct impression of the conservation areas existence directly opposite the junction of High Street on the other side of Cross Street the architecture again becomes distinctly modern in nature and is of considerably less historical importance than the majority of that found within the conservation area.

### **Hard Surfaces and Street Furniture**

The pedestrian zone of the conservation area is surfaced with paving blocks and has cast street furniture painted a deep red/maroon colour with detail picked out in gold paint. Though not entirely traditional in design the majority of this street furniture is of a reasonable quality and overall is considered to make a positive contribution to the appearance of the conservation area.

The majority of other surfaces are of black tarmac finish, this material is a drab grey/black in colour and is fairly texture and character less thus detracting from the intrinsic character of the conservation area.

Safety rails to the road edges along the footways surrounding the traffic island are of a standard dull grey metal modern design. Again this is poor quality for an area with such architectural significance.

In addition there are number of modern brick planters and benches located on the corner of the Market Place and Nottingham Road. This particular street furniture is of a poor quality design especially when it is considered that its location is at one of the entrances to the historic churchyard and is the first major impression much of the visitors to the area entering via the very busy traffic island will see. Clearly the design, style and materials do little to enhance this important part of the conservation area.

Street lighting in the conservation area, other than that already noted in the pedestrian zone, is of a poor quality modern design, produced from standard modern materials and again does very little to enhance or preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.

### **Landmarks**

The most significant landmark in the Conservation Area is the spire of the church of St Laurence. This important feature of the area can be glimpsed from many vantage points and provides a certain sense of place throughout much of the conservation area.

### **Natural Elements**



There are landscaped gardens to the front of the Hall which provide a green open spatial element in the conservation area. Similarly open green spaces are noted to both of the church yards which fall within the boundary of the conservation area. Such open spaces are important to the appearance and perception of what is otherwise a heavily developed area. There are a number of mature trees with individual Tree Preservation

Orders in the area and a number of group Tree Preservation Orders, in addition there are a number of tree groups within the landscaped garden areas which make a significant natural contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

### **8. Negative Elements**

There are two very large modern supermarket developments located on the edge of the conservation area boundary the size of these developments causes them to overshadow the area and detracts from the character and appearance of the area. In addition these two developments are located close to the two most important Listed Buildings within the area. They are constructed from modern materials and their design has no relationship with any of the buildings within the conservation area boundary.

In addition there are a number of modern 'in fill' developments within the conservation area. The majority of this type of development is of a bland, characterless design and is inappropriate in terms of style, form and materials. These developments do not make a positive contribution to the conservation area and in some cases are having a detrimental impact.

Many shop fronts in the conservation area are of a poor quality modern design incorporating modern untraditional materials in brash, garish colours. The existing shop fronts are detracting from the obvious quality and architectural significance of many of the somewhat grand commercial buildings within the town centre, and are having a detrimental impact on the intrinsic character of the conservation area as a whole.

Disused/empty buildings in a poor state of repair detract from the quality of the area and present a poor impression of the town centre.

A plethora of signage and poor quality pavement displays from traders is also detracting from the architectural quality of the area.

The storage of dustbins on the footway, graffiti and poor quality planters, seating and guard rails to highways are all having a significant detrimental impact in the conservation area.

## **9. Neutral areas**

There is little to recognise in terms of neutral elements within the Conservation Area. Although it is noted that some of the less intrusive modern developments may be considered neutral rather than negative in terms of their contribution within the conservation area.